

October 2003

Dear friends and neighbors,

It's property tax time again. As homeowners prepare to pay their taxes for the second half of this year (due Oct. 31), I'm reminded of the extraordinary burden property tax bills place on many low-income seniors.

I remain very concerned for homeowners whose taxes rise faster than their income. For this reason, I have continued to support legislation designed to ease the property tax burden for senior citizens.

This pamphlet describes how you can take advantage of the tax breaks the Legislature has adopted for seniors.

Reducing the property tax burden to keep housing affordable has been one of my ongoing efforts. I believe government's claim to tax revenue should never be the cause for people to lose their homes. At some point, we have to say you own your home, and we will not allow government to take that away from you.

As always, I'm interested in hearing from you about this or any other issue regarding state government. You may call or write my office using the address/phone information listed below.

Thank you for allowing me to serve you!

*Mary Skinner*

Rep. Mary Skinner  
14th District

**State Representative • 14th District**  
**Mary Skinner**



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*For more legislative news and  
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website at:*

[http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/  
skinner.htm](http://hrc.leg.wa.gov/members/skinner.htm)

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**ARE YOU GETTING THE  
PROPERTY TAX BREAKS  
YOU DESERVE?**

**State Representative**  
**Mary Skinner**  
P.O. Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

**Important Property Tax  
Information for Senior Citizens**



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# Senior Citizen Property Tax Relief

## PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS

### Who qualifies?

The Legislature has expanded the number of seniors who qualify for property tax exemptions.

You may qualify for property tax exemptions if you meet all of the following criteria:

- You are at least 61 years of age or disabled.
- You own and live in a single-family home, mobile home, or condominium.
- You have a combined household income not exceeding \$30,000.

Expenses for some nursing or home health care and some medications may be deducted when calculating your income. You also can remain eligible for tax breaks if your home is rented while you're in the hospital or nursing home.

### Valuation limit

Qualifying citizens are entitled to property tax exemptions on their principal residence and up to one acre of land. The value of the residence is frozen at its value on Jan. 1 of the year in which you first qualify for the program.

### Exemption schedule

You are eligible for the following exemptions if your combined household income falls within the range indicated.

#### Income

#### Exemption

\$24,001 to \$30,000

All excess levies (*special school levies are an example of excess levies*).

\$18,001 to \$24,000

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$40,000 or 35% of assessed valuation (\$60,000 max.).

\$18,000 or less

All excess levies and regular levies on the greater of \$50,000 or 60% of assessed valuation.

## PROPERTY TAX DEFERRALS

If you are at least 60 years of age or retired because of physical disability — and your disposable income is \$34,000 or less — you may qualify for property tax deferrals. The state allows property tax deferrals on up to 80 percent of the equity in your home. The deferral program applies to your principal residence and up to five acres, if zoning requires a larger parcel size.

**Under this program, you pay no property tax until the home is sold. The state pays the deferred taxes, and in exchange, receives a lien against the property equal to the amount of owed taxes plus 8 percent. Total taxes are collected when the property is sold or passed on.**



## REMODELING

People who remodel single-family homes can qualify for tax exemptions on the increased value of their property. Owners may claim tax exemptions on new additions of up to a third of the original value of their homes for three full years following remodeling. This exemption is available to all homeowners. **Be sure to contact the assessor's/treasurer's office before you finish your remodel project. Otherwise, you won't get the break.**

### ► How to apply for property tax breaks

For information on both property tax exemptions and deferrals, call your county assessor:

**Yakima County Assessor ..... (509) 574-1100**

For more information about our state's property tax laws, call:

**Washington State Department of Revenue ... 1-800-647-7706**

## MAKING MORE SENIORS ELIGIBLE FOR RELIEF

Reducing the property tax burden to keep housing affordable is one of my top priorities in the Legislature.



This past year, House Bill 1029 was introduced to provide property tax relief to seniors and the disabled by increasing the combined disposable income threshold which is used to determine who qualifies for property tax exemptions.

I also co-sponsored House Bill 2135 that would have allowed seniors to retain their property tax exemptions if they own their residence but move to an adult family home or boarding home.

Unfortunately, neither of these measures was given a vote in the House Finance Committee.

Although we did not see progress with these bills during the 2003 legislative session, they remain a priority for the coming 2004 session in January.

We should continue to do everything possible to restore fairness and provide relief for all homeowners, especially those on limited incomes, so that young families can afford their first homes and seniors can remain in their homes for as long as they choose.

### What are your thoughts?

I'd like to hear from you regarding property taxes or any other issue that involves state government. Please contact me and share your thoughts.

**Rep. Mary Skinner**

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